Our mission is to coalesce, inspire, and support the Head Start field as a leader in early childhood development and education.

State Investments in Head Start and Early Head Start to Support At-Risk Children and Families
More Important Than Ever

States face a crisis of at-risk young children and families. In 2020, 108,078 children ages five and under entered foster care, with 20% of those less than one year old. Family homelessness is a persistent problem, especially in high market cities and states, with families making up one-third of the homeless population. The opioid and fentanyl crisis has contributed to thousands of cases of childhood trauma. There is a ready-built solution to supporting at-risk children and families that has been embraced by D.C. and 14 states: local Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

Operated by approximately 1,600 community partners in all 50 states plus DC, Puerto Rico, and the territories, Head Start and Early Head Start (collectively referred to as “Head Start”) are comprehensive birth-to-five programs specifically designed to strengthen families, promote school readiness, and improve child health. They specialize in serving the complex needs of young children and families in poverty, children with disabilities (102,116 in the past program year), children in foster care (29,316), experiencing homelessness (50,431), or receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (346,355), among other challenging circumstances.

In their most recent budgets, state lawmakers have directly committed over $355 million in state funding collectively to expand Head Start to greater than 22,000 children ages birth to five, filling critical services gaps for at-risk children and families.

Access to Head Start and Early Head Start

While Head Start programs serve hundreds of thousands of children and families each year in all 50 states, millions of others are left out due to limited funding.

Only 36% of eligible children, ages three to five had access to Head Start.

Only 11% of eligible children under three had access to Early Head Start.

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3 The National Child Traumatic Stress Network “Child Trauma and Opioid Use: Policy Implications.”
4 ChildTrends. Adverse Childhood Experiences.
5 https://nhsa.org/resource/2022-state-fact-sheets
A Little State Funding Goes a Long Way: 5 State Examples

Whether they commit to $3 million or $25 million each year, 14 states and D.C. are directly investing state funds in Head Start and Early Head Start to improve outcomes for at-risk children and families. Here are five state examples that illustrate how a little extra funding for Head Start can go a long way in improving equity and opportunity for at-risk children and families.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>Expanding Access for Infants and Toddlers</td>
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<td>Oregon</td>
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<td>Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Improving Child Care Quality</td>
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<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>Supporting Teacher-Child Relationships</td>
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**Minnesota: Expanding Access for Infants and Toddlers**
Recognizing a lack of high-quality infant and toddler care throughout the state, Minnesota invests just over $25 million each year ($50 million over two years) to expand access to Early Head Start (and Head Start) for at-risk children, including tribal and rural communities. In the most recent year, 1,027 infants and toddlers were served with state funding.

**Oregon: Building a Pre-K System on Head Start**
Oregon has built their well-regarded Oregon Prekindergarten (OPK) program on Head Start. Three-fourths of grantees are federal Head Start programs and they follow Head Start’s performance standards. They invest almost $170 million and serve 7,377 low-income and at-risk children, which includes over $32 million for Early Head Start and reflects over 1,400 infants and toddlers.

**Pennsylvania: Meeting the Needs of Working Families**
The Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program in Pennsylvania provides state funding to Head Start preschool programs. Funds are intended for comprehensive services, including education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement initiatives aligned to the federal program requirements. The state’s $87.5 million serves over 6,600 Head Start children.

**Missouri: Improving Child Care Quality**
Over a decade ago, Missouri saw a need to improve the quality of care for infants and toddlers. Today, $6 million in state funding annually supports partnerships between Early Head Start programs and local child care providers to help 444 children and families, especially children with incarcerated parents, children with disabilities and pregnant women. The funding not only directly benefits 444 children, it creates a ripple effect that improves the overall quality of care for the other children in the supported child care classrooms. Understanding the importance of a comprehensive approach to childhood care and education, the Office of Childhood was established within the Missouri Department of Education.

**Massachusetts: Supporting Teacher-Child Relationships**
Lawmakers increased in state funding to $16.5 million to support higher teacher salaries and help programs meet their federally-required 20% funding match. While roughly 90% is used to support staff salaries, compensation and benefits to address recruitment and retention, funds may be used to provide high quality comprehensive services, such as coaches, mental health consultants, and additional staff to lower teacher/child ratios. Supporting the Head Start workforce benefits children and families by creating more stable and caring adult-child relationships in the classroom.
# States and D.C. Invest Over $356 Million Annually to Support More Children

Whether it is identifying a lack of quality early childhood education opportunities for children or an understanding of the cost of comprehensive cognitive, social-emotional, and developmental supports needed for vulnerable children, states and D.C. fund Head Start and Early Head Start programs for various reasons. Funds are used to expand slots for children, increase wages to recruit and sustain the workforce, improve quality or implement innovative enhancements, or assist in meeting the 20% federal match. Most programs utilize funds for a combination of these.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Head Start Funds</th>
<th>Early Head Start Funds</th>
<th>Additional HS Children</th>
<th>Additional EHS Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AK</td>
<td>$6,835,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>125</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td>$5,046,902</td>
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<td>1,713</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
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<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>$5,083,238</td>
<td></td>
<td>256</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.C.</td>
<td>$5,000,000***</td>
<td>$2,136,745****</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA</td>
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<td>$575,000</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
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<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD</td>
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<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>$13,800,000*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>2,667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td>$136,500,000**</td>
<td>$32,000,000**</td>
<td>5,962</td>
<td>1,415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>RI</td>
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<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WI</td>
<td>$6,264,100*****</td>
<td></td>
<td>368</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Oklahoma directly invests $1,800,000 in Head Start programs through a line-item and $12,000,000 in Early Head Start through a public-private partnership, the Oklahoma Early Childhood Program.

**Reflects the entire allocation for Oregon Pre-Kindergarten (OPK) funds; of the 30 OPK grantees, 26 are Head Start programs and all grantees follow Head Start guidelines.

***Approximately $5,000,000 and only represents District of Columbia Public School Head Start slots.

****Early Head Start is funding through the Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

*****HS and EHS Child Count is an estimate based on programs’ initial grant applications.
Multi-Generational Impact of Head Start on Families

**Stronger Families**
Families in Early Head Start have more positive parent-child relationships, more stable and healthy homes, and less child welfare involvement.

**Improved Health**
Head Start children are more likely to have hearing and vision screening, be covered by health insurance, receive dental care and be immunized.

**Economic Self-Sufficiency**
In the most recent program year, 79,340 families received assistance in enrolling into an education or job training program.

To view this research, visit: go.nhsa.org/advantage

Ready to Serve, Easy to Fund
The 14 states that support Head Start lean on this infrastructure:

- Minnesota offers a cost-per-child level of support that reflects federal rates.
- State grantees in Alaska remain eligible for funding if they are in good standing federally.
- Iowa, like many other states, has modest application and data collection requirements.

Most states support Head Start through general funds, but a few states access other revenue:

- Maine directs a portion of their tobacco settlement funds to support Head Start.
- Oklahoma invests in Head Start through their Department of Commerce budget.
- Oregon lawmakers issued a new business sales tax to fund new education investment

How Your State Can Help Close the Gap for At-Risk Kids

Persistent childhood poverty, paired with rising rates of foster care and other factors make Head Start and Early Head Start more important than ever as a tool to help at-risk children and families. Thanks to state-level and D.C. support of over $356 million, Head Start programs are directly reaching greater than 22,000 additional at-risk children and families and indirectly improving the lives of thousands more through Head Start’s ripple effect. Community-based and proven to work, Head Start and Early Head Start programs are ready to help more at-risk children and families in your state.

State supplemental funding for Early Head Start has allowed Families First Minnesota to address common barriers to early childhood educational services—center locations, teacher salaries, and retention, transportation, and flexibility—to meet community needs. Almost 10% of Families First’s $9 million budget is provided through the state supplemental funding.

“If truly committed to addressing the achievement or opportunity gap in your state, then providing funding for Head Start programs to serve more at-risk, eligible population would be a definitive way to address the issues.”

— Families First Minnesota Head Start and Early Head Start Director Sandy Simar. Read the full interview: go.nhsa.org/MN-EHS

For more information, contact Director of State Affairs Kent Mitchell at kmitchell@nhsa.org or Manager of State Affairs Katie Dufford-Meléndez at kdufford-melendez@nhsa.org.